

# The Great Companions

Henry Bryan Binns



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# The Great Companions

*By the Same Writer.*

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B. W. Huebsch

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.—Several of the paragraphs and verses printed below have already appeared in an earlier form, viz., I. v., II. i. iii, III. viii. xi., IV. iii., VIII. vii. viii., IX. ii. xvi. xxi, X. iii., XI. iii. vii. ix. in Parts I and II of *For the Fellowship*, published respectively in 1905 and 1906 by Headley Bros., and C. W. Daniel, and VIII. xviii., X. viii., XI. ii., in *Friends' Fellowship Papers*.

Nos. III. iii., IV. viii., VIII. v., appeared respectively in the *British Friend*, *New Age* and *Academy*, and to the proprietors of those journals I hereby beg to offer thanks for permission to reprint them. Also, to my friend Horace Traubel, who first published earlier versions of VII. ii. iii. vi., VIII. i. and IX. i., in the *Conservator*.

## Introductory

THE verse-makers contrive how they may pair together most admirably, as they were lovers, certain words whose chime is pleasant to the ear : they set between them the due intervals : they weave them thus into their theme.

But every poet hears, flowing amid the silence, the living intricate rhythm of the immortal song ; its words progress together in a cosmic fellowship, inseparable, moving forward in the liberty of a living thing.

## I. The Fellowship of the Earth

*All beauty dwells in the Earth's heart for Her children :  
They are the poets and lovers : they are the rich ;  
Nothing they own but Her.*

COME out among the bracken and the birches, and share in their delight ! Sprung out of the earth into the liberty of the wind and sunshine, the joy that gives them grace, the wonder of their undeniable life, is not for them alone.

If they green and glimmer in the sun, if they shiver and leap in the wind and sing and play in it, if they rejoice in the Earth and in Her fellowship,—they beckon also to us, though we be strangers, they welcome us declaring, out of the same earth are we sprung, kissed by the same great breezes, cherished by the sun, and in the same joy born.

IT is a last morning in May : a light air moves : already the hot sun is half-way up the sky : his breath steals in upon us.

Ah, to lean upon the fence and feel his breath steal in : to feel the dewy meadows all ashimmer with light : to let the feet of our fancy wander through the delicious grass into the shadow of the great oaks that stand up in the hedges, while overhead all heaven is as full of song as sunshine !

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But whither, ah, whither away upon this whiff of summer out of the high thorns ?

On, on ! For here the passers-by bring errands with them and will not let us forget. On ! till the good road gives out upon a rough wild common of furze and brakes and bushes, and the scrub sallow dreamily flying her cotton-seeds upon the soft breeze, and, thick as blown spray, the scent from foaming hills of hawthorn.

On, on ! Till out of reach of the road babbles a brook among its alders : birches, too, lean over it : it is bright and dark in their shadows : ready it runs to wash away the dulness of mere thoughts and of importances, baptizing one anew into the vivid life of Earth.

**I**S it so difficult, even here among the birches, to become a Child again ?

How good it were to lay the pride and stiffness of this manhood down ; to relinquish it all, to lie back into the arms of the divine reality, onto the breast of the Great Mother, and be embosomed again, if it might be, in Life,—a child, a little babe, sufficed in Her !

In Her bosom are the sources of joy : upon Her breast, if we might win thither, is rest and refreshing for our need.

My heart tells me She hath pity for Her babes, because they have forgotten Her touch ; because they have grown so busy and dry and stiff they cannot any more believe that their bodies were made on purpose to absorb joy and health and power, to receive and to communicate these, and their spirits the same ; because, while She is offering, they are for ever closing themselves up and up and up

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into their pride and striving, till now they can accept of Her next to nothing at all.

AND why should we be choking up our minds with the thoughts of books? Indeed, they are very well, but there are others better than they: thoughts that spring up in the heart of a man without his summons, as life springs up in the earth at the coming of Spring.

Book thoughts are well enough, but besides there are thoughts of the earth and sky: thoughts that are clouds in the west, and bees on the moor, and stars in the grass:—of quietness and of the Soul of All.

ONCE, long ago, a messenger came calling to me, “Put all the rest away, and live with me: I am the keeper of eternal life!” But I could not go with him, though ’t was life that I was seeking, for I did not know his voice.

Anon came another and another with like words, but “No!” said my heart, “you are not the one I wait for, you are not he that shall carry me home.”

Lonely then I lay and waited long.

Till, presently, one summer morning, I saw the trees and bracken beckoning to me, that I should make me ready: and I understood and was quiet, and prepared my heart for joy.

Like the morning breeze out of a primrose coppice the wonder caught me.

I heard One saying, “He awakes.”

I saw above me the immortal face of Nature full of love: and I knew, and cried with a quick glad cry, “Mother, my Mother!”

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The leaves of the grass touched me with loving welcome : " Brother," they said, " you are come home at last ! "

**A**ND now, in this fragrant heather, I lie back and breathe-in peace.

For I am become once more a babe upon the Mother's breast, and the Giver of bread is the Giver of that also without which life flags.

Out here in the quiet, come thoughts that are full of peace, for they grow up out of the earth : they are not weary to me as are my own struggling thoughts : nay, they are Hers, and feed me.

And nearer, nearer, nearer,—ah, though I see Her not, how near draws She.

**I**F we could but understand for a moment what it is She is saying, and what is She that gives us life, out of whose body, as out of an infinite treasury, wonders spring up for ever :—if we could but hear, if we could but understand, we too perhaps might speak Her words and give life to immortal things !

But chatter, chatter ! O busy brain, if you would but be still ! There is Something here, even now, making divine creative chords, the music of life that I am longing to hear, while you must chatter, chatter.

Though you are in the presence of God Himself, you must go on prinking yourself before your glass, playing your clever little pranks, laughing at your quips and sallies, eager for the rattle of that foolish voice, O busy wandering, childish wit !

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**B**UT who are you, tall friend, with winged and hairy body and slow-uncurling tip?

Who are you, tall friend at my knee, springing up out of the mould, eager for soaring, lithe beautiful child of the Earth?

They call you bracken, and you are a multitude, dear and delightful to me, ever inviting me with your welcome: but, though I lie among you gratefully, I do not know you: not though by touch you seem my kin, reminding me of mysteries, mysteries of my own I cannot guess—I do not know who you are, tall friend.

But I hold you to be some spirit angelical, clad, as for me, in green raiment, and for my questionings embodied in fair form.

For you, too, methinks, I must be a mysterious presence that lingers and passes you even as the wind passes.

And to myself this day I am strange: I am not what my senses glibly declare: what I am I know not.

But something in you leans to me and discovers itself, and in me, something leaning to you, gives my soul hints beyond thought.

Perhaps, in this soft evening air, something utters itself through the flesh of us both, and is said out of hearing,—that Something within us which our senses can neither tell to one another nor understand, but which yet desires speech and hearing.

Perhaps it is You, perhaps it is Me: perhaps it is heard in the ear of the Earth.

Perhaps our Mother, from whom we are sprung, the dear and wise One to Whom in a little we shall return, will presently tell us our names together, weaving them



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into Her song that men call death, and in Her telling them thus we shall understand.

IT is under the sky one rests, lying among the leaves at evening upon the breast of the Earth, drinking in at every pore the peace of Her vast life.

But in my lair among the leaves, with the evening joy about me like embracing arms, I hear a word of those afar, those who are born into another world of streets, who never even breathe the sweet free air.

It asks if I am doing aught for them, and whether I have any fellowship with them at all.

Then I hear a word within me, a word out of the Earth upon whose breast I lie : " Loving me," it says, " you love them also, all My children, however far estranged : if you would truly love them, any and all, first must you learn to love by loving Me."

AND again She says : " To give, but to give life. " To give, but as I give, not that which is good for some desire, but that which is good for life.

" Many a hunger will look out upon you from their eyes, but it is for life's longing you are come : to give them, if you may, what is enough for that : to say to them, in your way, the word that I am saying, answering together all the needs of all My children."

WHEN first I realized how far we all are straying from the common life of the Earth, I was afraid : but I heard Her voice within my heart cry, " Come unto Me ! "

Then though many another heard it not, I knew

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that it was calling every one, and that each in his hour would answer, though it should be but unwillingly, as when men render back their bodies to the clay.

And now that I have discovered that You love me, Mother, and are feeding me with joy, so that my life may wholly be a child of Yours, I begin to feel the love that is in Your heart calling back into Your bosom all Your children, eagerly calling them again into Your fields that are lonely for men.

And it seems to me that all who love You cannot cease to call them back.

**W**HEREFORE to you that are poor and have nothing to give, to you that are crushed under your nothingness, to you, reverently, I bring news good to carry, in one word, brief to say, from the Mother of men.

It is the word a woman says, the word of a mother to her little one, nay, it is no word at all, it is herself, her motherhood.

Little ones, it is no word I am bringing you when I bring you to the breast of the Mother that aches with inexpressible love for you.

**A**ND to many a greater one, I can hear, as it were, Her words: "Who are you that claim Me for your Mother seeking the essential life, but would fain keep you separate, shrinking from this, spurning at that, desiring the other?"

"You do as a child, childishly.

"My life is bigger than this, it accepts, and understands, and is whole.

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"When you are come into it and all things begin to be yours, you will not be dismayed to find the ugly and the sick, the bad and sad and mad are yours among the rest; for there will be that in you so antiseptic, vital and sound you will know that nothing can neutralize or extinguish it.

"Touching the body of corruption with your own flesh, you will be neither disgusted nor afraid: you will not need any longer to companion only with the beautiful and pure, for now you are in My life you are become a quickener of the dead and must seek whom you may quicken, a purifier of the foul and must go down into the mire that you may create beauty out of it.

"The life of man is a seed that must have the Earth to die into, if ever it is to arise miraculously and come rejoicing up into the sunlight.

"And when you are at last alive, you will accept all with confidence: and Death too, will be acceptable to you, and Love, which is as Death is: when you have learnt how to accept, you will not be anxious any more about Love and Death.

"Then, being anxious no more, you will stretch out your hand over disorder, disease and fear; you will reach out your hand to those that dwell in them: you will become one with them, hand in hand, and pour your life into their veins and take their life to run in yours: and you will be glad because of them, till your joy and singing become theirs.

"Because you have life, they also shall live; for you are no longer afraid of the fear that holds them captive, nor of the love that gives release."

## II. The Voice of Humanity

**I** HEARD the voice of Humanity saying: "When you turn aside from cities and all the ways of men—from their gardens, their orchards, their fields and their thoughts—flinging yourself at last upon some woodland floor to gaze into the drowsing movement of the boughs and listen to the birds after the rain; when you turn away from cities to the wild, what is it you are seeking?"

"My child, it is not solitude, it is fellowship that you seek, to escape from men into the life of Man, whereof the woods ever retain a part."

—The voice of Humanity saying: "Look deep, O child, into the eyes of the creatures; seek through all their tissues the soul of the green leaves; through their thick-hurrying notes the life of the birds, and through Her answer to thy feet the meaning of the Earth."

"Gaze, listen and search long, and thou shalt know at last My face from all things answering to thine eyes, My heart making reply to thine."

"And in that hour not alone shalt thou perceive Me in wildernesses afar from men, out of their eyes also will I answer thee, and thou shalt know My voice among their words."

"Nay, out of thine own body, hidden from thee so

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long, shall the glory of My joy shine forth. With blank face no more will thy skin greet thee, nor will thy members any longer wantonly rebel or stupidly obey, but all rejoicing together will endow thee with the mystery that now thou seekest in the woods."

And I heard the voice of Humanity saying: "My child, hast thou given thyself to Me? Henceforward thou shalt have no satisfaction but in Me.

"Henceforward there is that in thee that will not give thee peace until thou give it back to Me.

"I do beset thee with desire of Me, for thee have I desired and chosen.

"Whether among the bracken or among men, I will come calling thee, and needs must thou make answer.

"I have given a new sweetness to thy life and a new meaning, for I have made thee Mine.

"I have set a mark upon thee that all creatures know, to love thee or to hate thee for My sake."

**I**T was a Sunday of a wild October storm, the trees were swept, the rain streamed on the windows, the smoke puffed baffled from the chimney throat.

But sitting by my fireside, turning away from words and plans to seek the sources of life, quietness overtook me: quietness wherein, after a long perplexity, I rested and drew breath, over and over again, filling my spirit with it, feeling the breadth of life, feeling its mighty principle within me.

And it was all about me as a divine fellowship, showing me in a flash the need in the hearts of men, the hunger

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that is their unrest ; hunger and need for something necessary whereof as yet, I thought, they have no word to tell its form, even unto themselves.

No word, only the dumb bewildered longing, groping, clutching of blind hands for something they have not, only pain, striving, wrath of unbelief,—the life in them mere life's perplexity : every one offering to other this or that thing for solace, but none, not one uttering the word of quietness !

And yet, if none were uttering it, how then should I have heard ?

**I**T is as though, on wanderers' quests, over all the wide face of the world and through every country of thought, we had travelled and toiled, till we are become well-versed in the various knowledge of things : and now, here at home, there waits for us the best of all : a knowledge that is not found in going to and fro, such knowledge as a tree has of the Earth.

Now after much thinking and wide-searching, we may find it here, and by a very narrow way : in a moment of faith, gathering the life of all the soul up into singleness, and with that point piercing the shell of things, breaking the surface to spread out and grow within the Earth.

**A**ND who shall slight that knowledge ?

To live deep, where thought and sense do not disturb, is to become master of them, to pass beyond the pale of death, the questioning of immortality.

To gain that vantage-ground, to enter into that place, is, in so far, to realize the victory towards which

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all strivings and desires reach forward ; to win something imperishable, inalienable henceforward from humanity ; and what prize is better worth the quest ?

**O**THERS, indeed, are pressing forward to claim from the wilderness and the bog, now this, now that new field for the service of Man : others are winning back this criminal or that blind self-satisfied fool to the full life of Humanity.

But we, we also, are we not pressing forward, winning out of the unknown, fields for the feet of Man, fields for his spiritual food ?

Into the darkness, perilously adventuring, are we not catching glimpses of Him who keeps the secret of our soul ?

**T**HINK how life-long the labourers toil, till broken at last they are flung back into the earth whereinto went their toil, for you and me !

Think of London, and how, street upon street for leagues, without a wood or field, children are born for labour and to die in shame, for you and me !

How narrow, grey, meaningless seem their lives, unless in your life and in mine the breadth and colour and meaning be for them !

Unless out of each day we dedicate, if only one stern hour, to the toil of the soul, the conquest of thought, the deepening of our consciousness for them who toil for us ; that we who call us men may have our part among the people.

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**B**E not anxious about the body your love shall take : but know that, when your life is indeed become love, it will take the body proper to its power, and coming and going among mortals, it will make itself known.

Let your mind and body be truly dedicate to Love, so that all other motives may be dying out and being forgotten, but Love ever increasing : till all your purposes and thoughts and deeds find issue, as they had their source, in the abiding life that men call " Love " but God only, in whom it is perfect, knoweth its true compass and is its name.

Choose nothing for yourself, but abide the choice of Love : say nothing for an answer nor to fill up the measures of silence, save as Love impels : so will your life have judgment and much space in it ; its thoughts and deeds will be sure.

Keep the feasts of the soul, lest you be ingulfed in occupations and forget.

And though you may not turn aside out of the ways of men, yet by weariless patience shall you find, even in the midst of the press, spaces for solitude. Nay, and if these be absent, yet, if you are ever seeking Love, He will find you out in the midst ; He will not pass you by.

It is better to seek Him in the press, than going aside into a solitude, to forget His signs and so mistake His presence. Yea, even in your solitude He will not separate you from any, but will bring you into communion with All.

Learn to wait upon Love in all matters of your life, so that at last it be not you—the " you " you were—but He—the you that is now come up into being—who



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acts and lives : for only so can you come into full reality.

And being come thither, then all the old life will live again transfigured, whole, its meaning plain before you : not one part only, surviving the destruction of the rest, but the soul holding all in possession to use and to fulfil, moving through life in the liberty of one that has its secret, of one whose deeds are large and sure.

### III. Tree Life

**T**HAT clump of aconites in the border—tight yellow globes under the cloud, golden honeyed goblets under the sun!

This hillside too—there is something here that opens out its heart when the sun finds it, to hide it again in the shadow.

No blossoms yet, nor leaves upon the birches: the brakes are but the remnants of the year gone by, yet when the sun is on them, already they rejoice!

The doors of the cells stand wide, the pores of the earth are open: everything forgets its past rejoicing in the present.

Our hearts no longer can enfold and hide whatever is within them: they open, yet timidly—for either they were covering up some sorrow or some shame—but “Rejoice!” cries the sun and “Behold!” he cries, and they forget and look out.

Then he enters those chambers; he covers up their dead with life, and fills them with its fragrance.

He goes; the cloud draws down again; the petals close themselves: but in the chamber is a change; its occupant is never quite so sad again once she has

forgotten her sadness, opening her door to the February sun.

**E**MBRACING Spirit ! Even as the springing plant unto the air of summer, so would my heart abandon itself to Thee !

Yet would I be none other than myself, giving myself to Thee : from Thee I claim the fulness of my being.

Sometimes indeed, I deceive myself, demanding that I be wholly converted out of this my self, and into Thee : that I may altogether be quit of and abandon this little me, and become the measureless wind I love, or the all-flooding Light. " Poor Thing," say I, " it were better for you to perish into that glory of air and sun !

" Little foolish nothing of a leaf, cease your bewildered flutterings of effort, and sink again into the universal earth : give up your being of an hour into the immortal air."

Often, as may perchance a leaf on some great tree, I become weary of my leafhood : and when the sap begins to rise in the old trunk, flowing out along the branches, invading my veins, I sigh, " O Sap, divine life of me, surely I myself am no separate leaf at all, surely I am only what Thou art !

" It is Thou art really I, for Thou art my very life.

" Let me know nothing but Thee : let all my life be purely Thine ! "

Then for a moment I know nothing but the flowing Sap, and it is I : but the wind comes a-calling, and I remember I am a leaf, without whom he could not communicate his message to my tree.

Sometimes also, in my folly, I speak in this wise—

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(and again I am as a leaf upon a tree whose flowers are far apart and splendid, of whose rare blossoming we speak together. We call the flowers by name, each one as it were a god; but for this branch of leaves or that, there is one special flower which is its own)—when the Sap, in its flowing, reaches me, I say, “ Flower, Flower, Flower! though I see thee not now, yet am I sure thou growest somewhere upon my tree, and art the meaning and the glory of my tree!

“ Nothing am I unless I be joined to Thee, Heavenly One! Mere leaf that I am, I worship Thee.

“ There is a life in me that is for Thee: I would all else of me might perish, and this alone might live, that wholly I might live for Thee!”

And again I cry: “ O Flower! I also might have been as Thou—I that am stunted and thwarted and become but a leaf, in whom the passion is bitter that in thy nectaries is sweet, and blind the senses that look out of thy bright face:—how long must I vainly cry for this my leafhood to be changed to fulness such as Thine?”

But sometimes—whether out of the morning-dews or out of the heart of the Tree or of my own essential leafhood, I know not—sometimes there come to me sure pulsings of Earth-wisdom to content me with my lot.

And the sap in my veins murmurs peace that is better than promise, and I know it is good to be a leaf.

I know the tree is not for the flower, not yet the leaf for the flower, but leaf and flower have their life, and both together are for the tree.

*OUR God is like a Tree  
Upon whose twigs we grew,  
Knowing not it was He  
The leafy summer through :  
But now the Autumn gales  
Blow, and our leafhood fails—  
Our leafhood yet not We—  
Soon shall it shrivelling fall :  
Yet Winter slays not all—  
Something lives on the Winter through,  
Something upon whose twigs we grew :  
While from its leafhood free  
Our life withdraweth deep  
Into the Earth to sleep :  
—Our God is like a Tree.*

UPON this world-old Tree, we are as leaves that in the gales of Time flutter upon the branches that endure, and share and feed the tree-life.

In the season of Faith breaks the Tree into flower, and all the nurture treasured of old within the stock into one blossom goes.

Surely such a blossom was Jesus the Christ, renewer of Humanity, teller of the secret of Man—the secret hidden save in His face of love, His life, His death, that falling of the impregnate seed back into earth for Man's new birth of consciousness.

The season of Faith draws on again ; the old Tree is about to bloom even as of old : the virtue in the sap is moving, desire grows potent, and divine love flows along the branches, stirring behind the leaves.

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AND on this wise murmurs the Life within me :—  
“Be not content with any experience or discovery of yours until it bear fruit in the Tree, for otherwise it is not yet your own.

“Beware of praise, which is the same as misunderstanding : but love is of the fellowship, even the love of the foolish, and it is your life.

“Live in the midst where life is.

“Keep close as may be to the common lot, strong in the stock of the great Tree : then in your season shall you bear fruit therein, and renew its life in you.

“You are not for ever to remain a bearer only of leaves that fall and decay ; but a bearer of fruit shall you be, that after it is fallen springs up anew with increase.”

FOR awhile I supposed it was this and this, but I know now what it was I wanted, and I shall be a fool if I give not all for That.

In That all else roots and forms, becomes alive and has permanence : in That, Humanity has His being, and we in Him : He is as a great Tree securely set in That.

When I am aware of That then I live : between whiles it is as though I only dreamed.

For That is much more than you or I : and its life is more than ours.

When I fall out of That, and live only as of old, then am I weary and desolate, as an exile far from home.

But to awake in That, is to be come up anew into life : to be doubly born.

By the mortal birth we begin to live, putting forth

out of unconsciousness, as it were blossoms upon a tree, craving they know not what of the sunshine.

But when their life is fertilized it forms anew within them and thenceforward is secure, continuing though the flowers perish, drawing nourishment awhile from the tree, and at last, when it is fallen, out of the Earth itself.

AS the seed-spirit grows, choosing from earth and air its nourishment, taking of air and earth all that it can embody,—so every soul, by faith.

Tiny and solitary, the soul is as a dead grain of dust, till through the dumb world-walls that close it round, its kindred call it in the awakening rain.

Then it discovers all about it kindly substances, and feeds and feeds on them.

So, as it feeds, come all things: with perplexing faces new and strange, they offer it themselves.

Slowly, and one by one, the master-soul greets all, refusing none for ever, but taking each in season: till, like the mustard seed, it builds a Tree whose roots clasp round the Earth while all the stars twinkle between its branches.

MARK how lithe are the trees, adventuring in the gale that will perhaps reave presently a limb away.

Mark the sea-men too, how free and noble a race, or the mothers of many child-births.

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And beware how you ensure yourself and those you love against life and its perils !

*My heart, it is the heart of some good timber tree  
That loves its place in the fields or by the wayside set ;  
Rain and sunshine it loves, but most the dear earth under.*

MY heart is as the heart of the tree when the sea-wind fills it with boding cries, rending its branches, tugging up its roots, the very earth yielding to let it go ; and the storm to a hurricane rising, with deafening shout and roar as of an overwhelming ocean, crashing comes to claim it.

My heart is as the tree's heart then, confused and desolate, hating the sea, to its hold in the dear earth clinging with innumerable torn and bleeding rootlets.

"My God ! My God !" it cries, "Nourisher and sustainer of my life, I will not yield my living hold on Thee-! Let not the stormy fiend tear me away from Thee !"

I feel a still voice thrill among my chattering boughs down even to my writhing roots, that says : "The Sea, wherein there seems nor rest nor root is Mine : there shalt thou swim and bathe thyself in Me !"

My heart is as the tree's heart fain to grow securely in my place : but now the wind bids me prepare for wandering and the new uses of strange adventure : I must take the sea-ways : last of all I must be the food of fire, ashes and smoke and flame.

And I rebel : I cry to Earth my God : till, chiding



at my fears, a voice will say: "God is the living Earth, the living Air: God is the living Sea: God is the living Fire.

"As Earth thou trustest Him: trust thyself to the Sea, as do all wanderers bidden forth of Him: yea, to the fire, that would not hunger for thee did it not love thee well!

"Till, letting go thy flickering ashes and soft smoke to blow into the wilds of space, thy spirit breathe the breath of God again!"

**C**AST loose unto the deep if you would know what life is, life that consists in taking perils, not eluding them, of mastering wind and wave, not riding at an anchor.

You were not made for safe and silent waters: your sails and sheets and timbers are for the shouting winds and rhythmic billows.

Cast loose then, every inch of you was framed for bold sea-faring!

Ah, why now would you dally any longer? Why cling now any more—as though you were no ship, but only some dead log—haunting these wharves and jetties?

I think you are still dreaming of your fields and forests: still turning wistfully to them, still longing for the dear earth in which so long you rooted.

Ha! Ha! Do you not hear the wind laugh? Do you not hear the waves a-calling you?

They have a secret for you, if you will but go: out beyond the breakwater they will tell you wonderful things.

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For now you belong out there : out there everything will be telling you the new creature that you are.

**N**OW I will launch out into the sea, voyaging with my sails, and going forth in faith from these safe shores, these inland waters I have known.

I carry an Unknown Voyager whose errand I know not, save that He crieth to me continually as I go, "Have faith, little brother ! Have faith !"

#### IV. The Coming of Man

I HEARD the wind blow out of the West, singing the song of Democracy, crying to men over-sea the challenge of Man.

O wind, crying deliverance, carrying the young moon like a sickle of steel in your hand, I hear in your breath the name that is in my heart, the name of Him that is sure !

Indifferent, across the innumerable years, and now across the hurrying, quarrelling nations, you cry His advent : and out of the eyes of men, with glancings surer than steel, comes the answer of Him that awakes.

Painfully, with bewilderment, out of long patience and labour, in one and one, even now He awakes.

Solitary and far-sundered are they, with unsatisfied groping hands seeking about the world for their comrades : but when they hear you calling out of the West, and see that white sickle of harvesting in your hand, then know they one another.

You call, and at the touching of hands, the flashing of eyes together, runs the thrill of some great life throughout their being, shattering their separation into one enorbing joy.

Beyond one another now they behold Man, the awful One that was to be, who is at last awaking : and in

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their hearts from West to East they hear you crying defiance, death, and the loyalty of comrades.

SOMETIMES I am a man very busy with tasks, urged on by duty or ambition, by this goad or by that, or whole or sick, eager or weary : and sometimes, no man at all : only and wholly, in my consciousness, substance of the Body Divine, all that I do and am a mystery.

WHEREFORE, it is not serving on committees that I live my life, but going thither of an evening, alone upon the road, under the full white moon who walks among the clouds beyond the bowing tree-tops, while all the little houses disappear into the light she floods toward the West, filling the high-arched heaven brim-full up to the stars : for then I remember what I was forgetting : I come back face to face with life again, and what we are.

Looking outward through mine eyes into that flood of light, I see my soul as in a glass reflected, infinite as the stellar height, full as that river running toward the West.

Gazing into the mystery there throbs within my body the pulse of the unseen almighty Son of Man, filling my world with worship.

WE are a band of comrades scattered over the world, hardly seeing from so far one another's faces, hardly reaching one another's hands :—

Yet are we inseparable, livingly co-ordinate, one Body, the Body of Thy\_fellowship, O Thou, nameless,

## The Coming of Man 33

divine Companion, in Whom alone, we, scattered, apart and each one separated to some task the others cannot share, find our unfailing strength and our abiding home.

Nay, Friend, Thou art not without a name among those that meet in Thee, for each by some name passionately invokes Thee, Thou answering each.

Yet when we speak of Thee with one another, nameless art Thou ; or if we name Thee, then is the name but as our fancy's finger pointing at Thee.

But Thou no shadow art, no fancy ; Blood of our Body, Soul of our Fellowship, so near so sure we need no name for Thee !

**T**HUS sayest thou, Lord of Life : “ I also, am as a man, into the deep of things jetting mine own electric will, begetting children.

“ I also, am as a man : in every age, some have I taken into solitudes—loving, and yet apart from men—chosen to be my members of begetting, vehicles of my passion.

“ Not children for themselves do they beget : but through them, I, sowing effectual seed amid her clay, cause the Earth to conceive of Me anew.

“ Of old, prophets were they, and still they shall be prophets : immortally their words bear life to them that wait them.

“ I also, am as a man, terrible fierce with life : like a fiery sword, my chosen pierces the Unknown to procreate sons of Mine.

“ Unashamed shall he be, for he is Mine : undismayed though seized by mad possession ; cruelly plunged into the body of Fellowship with cleaving power to

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break it, yea, to slay it by the birth of that which I beget.

I also, am as a man ! O man, lonely, unsatisfied, seeking still your place, dare you to find your mystic place in Me ? ”

“ I, MAN, wanderer, stranger among the creatures—most among men a wanderer and a stranger—out of your dreams awake.

“ You were dreaming the old dreams that prove themselves true, that *are* true till I awake—dreams of usefulness, dreams of attainment to this end or that ; selfish, unselfish dreams ; of days gone-by, of days to-be—to you they were not dreams, they proved themselves real—but I awake in you, I, Man.

“ At the turning of a page, at the coming of a woman or a man, stranger or comrade seeming, but no more a stranger or a comrade, suddenly, after so profound a slumber that you knew not I was there asleep within you,—I awake.

“ I take your eyes, and look out through them on a world you never saw, and laugh for joy.

“ I take your eyes and look out upon your dreams, and tell you they are dreams ; and give you, for a moment, vision, taste, hearing, smell and touch of verity.

“ Yes, I awake—Man, ultimate verity, whose life is not the dreamy life men live the while I sleep : whose life wakes in the passionate love of comrades, men and women, dying not when they die.

“ I take your body, prepared of love ; and now,

## The Coming of Man 35

at the turning of a page, at the glancing of a lover—now, for a moment only, I fill it with Myself.

“I wanderer, stranger, searching the worlds for ever for My mate, now, for a moment only, dismissing fear from you, and heed of aught (they will return again when you forget Me, though for a time, as unrest and perplexity I haunt you, to return)—wakening you from the memories, cares and hopes that are your dream—I, through your eyes behold Her.

“Her, for a moment of eternal rapture, through you, I love.”

THE voice of the creatures that waken and cry :  
“Who is there that will lead us into the way ?  
—will bring us into the way that leads home ?”

The voice of one that crieth bidding them into the way, the way of fellowship that is for their feet, the way of fellowship that leads home :—

“*MAN* is my name, and my spirit is free ;  
Mine are the laws, and behold, I am free of  
them,

*Garments are they that I doff or I don,  
Mine for my service or else I have done with them.*

“*Are they my body ? Are they my breath ?  
Are they my purpose that now they should hinder me ?  
I am the maker and master of laws,  
Man is my name, and my spirit is Liberty.*

“*Gods I beheld in my passionate dreams,  
Gods I created, aspiring to deity !*

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*Let you go by or let you abide,  
Man is my name, and the ages go over me.*

*" Past that is gone, Future to be,  
Present of mine that transcends and embraces them,  
Here in my flesh is the wonder divine,  
Here in this body the spring of eternity.*

*" I am come up out of fear and desire,  
Quick in my nostrils the breath of the Fellowship,  
Out from mine eyes flash the forms that endure,  
Throbs through my pulses the music that marshals  
them.*

*" For I was meek, for I was mild,  
For I was penitent, humble and patient,  
Therefore my heart is the heart of the Lord,  
And I accomplish the joy of creation."*



## V. The City

AS though they had never been young—dull-eyed, disappointed, dreary—men and women go by along the path before me.

But blithe and all adventure, their sons and their daughters, eager-eyed, lovely-faced, woo one another, as though they could never grow old.

THE Sunday crowds, this summer evening, fill the streets with strange adventures for the heart of a youth : after the restricted hours, a hundred new companion faces, with beckoning glee and merry eyes, and secrets in them to discover.

Laughing he passes, he guesses, he questions them : laughing as they pass him by, they answer.

Till of a sudden, one, moving in a mystery ! her eyes are bright with meaning, her lurking life through all her dress bewilders him—she did not touch him, but he felt her close : she did not speak, but she was saying something—ah, now she is gone by !

Going, she glances backward, and at the sign of her he leaves himself to follow, follow into new seas uncharted yet.

But she—she has not guessed her own life's secret : she does not know what is it that shines out through all her flesh upon him.

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The Sunday streets are grown adventurous to the venturing heart of youth.

AS I went along the streets, I was bewildered by the myriad faces.

There were many that passed by without a sign; but first one stranger, then another, would seem to beckon or to challenge me, and I must needs turn back to answer, till I was bewildered.

I was distraught because of the passers-by: why should they so catch at me?

The fierce and caressing glances were perhaps as nothings; but all that whispering of the innumerable crowd bewildered me and shook my heart.

As I went through the thick of the faces I became afraid of life itself, so multitudinous, vast and hostile, so hard to be resisted.

That stolid stony London was all alive; on every side I felt it touch and thrill me.

In the country there is room to be alone, and quiet to consider in; but in the city I was always beset by the eyes and breath of them that toy with caged wild passions.

I grew afraid of the whirling, eddying currents, sweeping along the narrow streets; for through them gleamed a wrath, thwarted, confined, shut in from wide horizons, from the trees and the blowing of the free night-winds.

As I walked I was aware of sinister dark shapes lurking in byways, and horrible things haunting the shadows; in my own heart also, in its byways and among its shadows, I could feel the same forms lurking, haunting, so that I was bewildered and afraid. . . .

But now I am no longer to be dismayed because of that river of faces, because of the signals and suggestions of the passers-by.

Though they challenge and awaken in me a multitude that is not I, I walk among them undismayed.

Vainly now they call me, idly frown and beckon ; I am indifferent though they catch at me with wanton fingers, for myself I am awake ; it is myself that makes reply.

Now it is I that go forth with signal and with challenge, saying my word to all, confronting each to-day with a glance from which now he in his turn, she in hers, cannot escape.

WHEN I go up out of my sunny fields to the grey City, wearily to inhale its heavy air, I cry to myself, " 'Twas the devil that made London ! Here are the gates of Hell, devourers of men ! " For very lonely seem her iron streets to me, separating me from my heart's desire.

In my cottage love abides ; thither from day to day, to quicken my slow pulses, from comrades out of every land and age, some message finds me.

Also, the sun is my companion on the hills, and the winds of heaven : the woods speak with me, and the little creatures in the fields, and I am free of the illimitable sky.

Yet sometimes, even to one whom the Earth has blessed, and for whom the Great Fellowship stands open, to him, also, comes the desire of London, grey-robed, belov'd of men, sitting at her misty window with words to speed and welcome.

Then I understand the loneliness of the fields; I long for the thick press of faces, the electric contact of the crowd, the pregnant meeting of some stranger in the streets, and all the stirring intercourse of men.

I grow deaf to the dear God of the fields: mine eyes are dull: my soul shrivels away: though the sun and wind are calling me, passionately I cry "Give me the life of men!"

Eagerly, then, I come to you, grey-robed Lady; even health and assurance of heart are become less to me than your gift.

And for that I must be where men and women gather, in the streets, the shops, the clubs and taverns, the theatres and parks and churches; I must go with the torrent of my kind, must be mixed with men, laughing, despairing, lost in that resistless river.

In such hours, O grey City, I remember, wondering, who made you long ago, impassioning you with fateful love.

It was Man who begat you, his daughter, to be beloved for your high heart, for your imperious will, your intense eyes, and quick drawn breath.

But now are you fallen sick, and there comes a sickness into my heart with the love of you, and to dwell with you is become an evil thing.

Wherefore, our Lady, we that love you, pray you come away now and walk the fields; you have kept watch too long at your river window; your bridal gown is faded and grey; is it not time you went on holiday?

Behold England, your garden! how pleasantly it lies, and for the sake of you how it lies lonely!

Does not your heart hunger again for its remembered brooks, its dewy meadows, its golden wide champaign, its purple moors and mountains where once you were a child? Does not your body weary of its robe, and long for flowers?

Let your feet carry you out to the sweet places of the grass where Mother Earth awaits you.

**I**T is good to the soul to walk on Hampstead Heath! I climb the ridge to the wide prospect, the woody basin and far hills: then, through the living wonder of a green world, by sandy trodden paths descending, I put the high ridge between London and my heart.

Here the bracken and the birches make me a welcome as for some wanderer returned: and the breath of the soil restores my troubled soul: underfoot, I feel the dear earth soft with leaves, and the little dead sheathings of leaves: my heart rejoices in the fine filigree work of the tormentil, the bright drops on the grasses, the bramble flowers, the defiant heather, the sorrel and the sage, the mystical hints in the pale of the birch boughs against the dark shades.

The glass-shards and the scattered papers seem a very little thing, the boughs broken and the shouting boys but little—for I breathe the eternal, the ineffable subtlety of the blossoming limes.

London, over yonder, is it your banks and ware-houses, your slums and factories that you truly prize? Or is it perhaps this unforgettable grass, this smell of the earth, these songs among the leaves?

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O after all, the skylark nests within your heart ; and though you may be speaking falsehoods, yet do you love the truth : though to-day, even here in these free groves, trampling, slaying and destroying, you blaspheme the eternal, yet are you come of the Earth, and even here, out of the Earth shall you remember and learn worship, O daughter of the Earth.

She has patience, and her children fail her not at last.

The grasshoppers will return to their ancient playgrounds, with joy and love, laughter of children and desire of youth, daring of manhood and divine assurance of old age.

Then why should I lament you, fir-trees on the knoll, though to-day the smoke is slaying you ? To your places, when the smoke is passed you shall return, lifting your wonderful heads against the windy sky ! Already I can almost hear the squirrels and the rabbits coming back, with fine sallies of tree-laughter and moonlight mirth bringing the good days in, the evil days forgot.

A promise fills my heart when I walk on Hampstead Heath, with this divine tree-quiet, this immortal wind-murmur, this abiding Earth-peace, beyond and under all.

**I** SEEM to see the gentlemen of England white upon the field of their national game : but alas, it is not now, in my sight, a wicket against which they play : I see a Cross—or is it three set up together—a Son of Man still hanging in the midst.

The others do not see : it stands far enough from

the bowler to make him a fair mark ; the batsman's back is turned ; the eyes of the wicket-keeper are upon the game ; he is well-gloved, and though he stump the batsman he will never notice there is blood upon the bails, or I think he must cry out unmannerly and interrupt the game.

That red thing they are bowling with and buffeting, I can see now well enough why it is such a sullen red : but the players do not see : as of old, they have chosen a mark, how should they perceive that the times are altered, or recognize for Golgotha the place in which they stand ?

Yesterday, indeed, good humour and politeness and the playing of the game seemed excellent things : but to-day, the great words are being spoken, to be a man, a woman, is what they demand.

The day is come, but they go on playing : for yonder mark will serve : they cannot feel in their white hands while they bandy it, the throb of that fierce human heart, eager to be buffeted and broken if needs be, for the making of liberty and justice—is it not indeed the heart of a god ?—but they use it merely to make runs !

Let them play on ! but the day is come, and with it work to be doing that our hands ache for : to-day at last, we shall spend our blood !

For the red flag is flying, the pass-words are chosen, the revolution has commenced : but, since it is no game of battles, the gentlemen-warriors do not notice it : no, no ! this is no game of battles !

It is a new creation, the living labour of true men and women, comrades ; who are disentangled from

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the fabric of good society, and are not beholden to its lords : comrades, for whom the others are become as pitiful shadows of the Past, playing their foolish shadowy game amid the morning breezes and the awakened grass.

OUT from our labour, from the narrow streets, laughing and singing, we troop into the free fields, we, the people.

It is May month : here in the dusk, breathes for us the world's forgotten wonder, that our hearts, kindling together as they meet, again discover.

Other meetings are in the town, their windows closed against the noisy street, brimful of words : praising some sage and changeless Past, telling over again some cherished legend of ventures well-approved and hopes secure now, with loud congratulations.

But here, in the sweet Spring air, under the hawthorns there is another Voice abroad : " Forward ! " the wonder bids, to ever-new adventures, perilous hopes : strange eyes are kindling here, strange hands grasping each other for the future.

Nor strangers only, nor only here under the fragrant boughs : but everywhere to-night, Faith moves among the people ; hands, reaching out, find a new comradeship ; old memories bud with promise ; into our circle out of all the ages come the Great Companions.



## VII. One of London's Lovers

*To Ben Kirkman Gray.*

HE was knotty timber, intricate of fibre, and stern made ; good for the fire once he was kindled.

I can see him still as on some winter's night, against the friendly blaze ; now this way and now that, bewilderingly he thrusts the searching point of his swift thought, with mischievous delight.

I see him in the fields, the light about him, surrounded by the flowers in the deep grass, worshipping as a lover before the daily beauty of the Earth.

Again, alone in the wet gale, grappling his task, hatless, determined, chin stubbornly set, eyes big and deep under his brow ; short, compact, I see him stride, with clenching fists, enduring in the fight.

SUCH a man, I suppose, walked once the Athenian ways, fierce of brain, vehement, relentless, kind : ever-young questioner of all ; lover of men ; cherishing in his breast a late-maturing passion, an age-enkindling flame.

Old Questioner ! how many questions are we not fain to ask you ! Could we but catch, O Socrates, even to-day, the secret of that passion that glows so red among your words !

And he, my friend, knotty and slow of growth, con-

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tinuing yet to grow, sprang from the root of you, impassioned still as by some primal prophecy out of the constant Earth.

SEE him, and guess what word it is that hangs upon his lips, shoots from his eyes and throbs within his brow !

What is it that he sees behind those pages : whose is the face that from the ranked statistics, looks out and answers with unspeakable gaze ?

Walking the hills beside him, guess what is 't the trees are telling him, and what the wind declares, what truth it is the Earth is certifying to him, lover of Her and truth.

IF you were to go down into the Dorset village where he was born, now, after five and forty years, perhaps the little manse might say over again for you the secret spoken in it then, but though you heard it, would you understand what even he was long in understanding?

For he was knotty timber of the Earth and slow of growth.

It was not indeed for nothing he was bred a country lad, learning the gloom and the clear of the sky, adventuring in green fields where run bright brooks among the king-cups ; crouching under the twisted thorn with all the gale about him, becoming at night familiar with the stars.

At home with the earth-creatures, a child of the Earth, never was he to wander out of Her wisdom, though he should walk the streets, noisy and deep and hard.

HE received Her secret and was nourished of the Earth, but could not understand.

No, when he came to London, to take up his lonely life, his uncongenial task, plodding thither and back and forcing his brain to plod while there awakened in him the fierce thirst for knowledge—he might not understand the word that hid within his breast.

Bitterly, but not vainly then he fought for knowledge, and for self-knowledge, pacing the noisy streets, through those long years before he understood, or any understood him.

Lonely, hungry and proud, the heart of the young man cried, "Very well, you world! you shall never understand me!"

He would have hidden himself afar, like a sick wild creature, perishing solitary, unseen, in his dark rage.

BUT when he went into the fields, the eternal loveliness of Nature wooed him; and Love, wounded by his fierce pride, bade, all night long the stars reprove him, till, with new eyes, he should discern the sympathy of those that shared perplexed, the struggle of his being, inseparable from his life.

So, coming up to manhood, he began to love now one and now another, and presently, the people.

THEN not for nothing he recalled his childish fear, nightmare of dreadful flight from an inexorable hunter—the bland doors of the workhouse waiting, waiting.

But now for other than himself he dreaded them, that loomed up ever blander, ever vaster, before their

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hopeless quarry, lording it over the foolish city, doors of the huge hold of that werewolf, infidelity.

Confronting them, his fear gave place to wrath against the barren industry, the stupid satisfactions, ineffectual discontents of men.

A fire was kindling in him: as on a hearth, with sacred care, he nursed its smoke-encumbered flame

**W**RATH deepened into passion.

Year after year, brooding within his heart and pent behind his lips, the purpose gathered, waiting its time for speech.

He sought in the churches whether there were some place, whence, ringing through the rafters of the past, its challenge might arouse the warrior, Faith.

No place for it he found, but seeking there, if he found pious foes, he won brave comrades—labourers, artisans, young men and women questioning life, who, if they scarcely savoured the too subtle substance of his thought, caught from his face the promise of a task full worthy manhood.

Also, a wanderer emerging from his loneliness, he found a mate to match his eager heart, assure him through impatience, quicken the fire and bring that great word forth.

**R**EBEL against the callow loves and easy moods of men, his sudden-blazing manhood flashed its truth out at a look, a word, stabbing the false thing through with the white scorn of its relentless light: his rough prophetic wrath fed by the passionate tenderness that filled his soul.

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For now, whole-hearted, his manhood was become the lover of a City, and she in bonds, in the toils of the great hunter.

London, that has forgotten her hope, sad, beautiful daughter of Earth—to Her he had given his heart.

He knew what joy was lost among the trodden human grasses of her fields, and what ineffable fruit should hang on her bare ominous tree: for the wise Earth had told him.

**L**ONDON, a living soul!

It was not for her past nor for her shows he loved her—save as they shone in the eyes of her gutter-brood a-dance about the organ-man; or of her sweated seamstress, wrapped in some poor linen and the glory of her first motherhood; or of some hungry dreamer of great dreams,—in such he saw her face, her tragic face, all dim with evil things, London, the passion of his life.

Ever more royally, for love of her, he entertained that god-like guest, mocker of meanness and rebuker of kings, wrath that is also laughter.

Ever henceforward was he at labour for her; by day and night devising how he might rouse up Faith, and waken her, sad Titaness, with words of Liberty sprung out of her own fair desolate long-unvisited fields, and they might welcome her, returning.

**S**HE shall return! yes, though the bonds thicken about her, and his voice cry out no more.

Was it for nothing he was born a country lad to

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know the gloom and the clear of the sky ? For nothing he won knowledge, for nothing he learned love ?

Was it in vain he saw her face, and knew in that sad face the beauty men may die for and not die—the purpose of the ages ?

But his was timber for the undying fire.

His passion made him one with the sure will of Life : grown potent by his love, he died amid creative hopes, imperishable and triumphant.

Sadly I came out of his vacant house, when lo, a red flag flying : a wrathful, challenging flag of flame that flaunted in the breeze and cried, blithe but defiant, as it were he, my friend.

**F**RRIEND, friend ! You would not let us be content with any aims of ours : you kept before us, your keen eyes saw it well, an aim that was better than they.

You would not be satisfied : and because of you, we were ashamed to find our satisfaction in achievements still unreal, achievements that accomplish nothing of the Task that Man was made for—Liberty—the carrying captivity captive, and letting the oppressed go free.

That Task always before you, near and vociferous as the London street, but ultimate and endless as creation—proving it yours to do, you loved it, friend, and now shall death prevent you ?

No, for I feel you call us comradely that we relinquish other aims, tackling the task sublime reserved for manly comrades, winning our life and death together with you.

## VII. Pioneers

### *A Mechanic.*

A MECHANIC, wearing a muffler and dirty white jersey, with round boy's face full of the pleasure of life, he sat opposite me in the railway carriage eager to talk.

He told with relish all the details of his stories, the names of his favourite pubs, where he called on his long Sunday tramps—"Walking is a hobby of mine," says he :—and just how it was he paid out the officer who had bullied him in the ranks, his blue eyes shone with glee as he told me.

He lives two hours from work, but no sooner is he home at night and washed and cleaned up after supper, than off he sets again to meet some friend.

He spoke well, his thoughts finding the right words and enjoying them ; and when we shook hands at my station, I knew him for a good friend at need, and I can still see his boy's face, and feel the great pleasure his life was giving him, yes, even the telling it to a stranger.

### *Honest Robin.*

HE is so frank a fellow he thinks shame of hiding up his heart. Glad in his youth, he vests in green.

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Thoughtful and red as a berry is his mouth, his grey Scots eyes quiet and comradely.

Brown-legged, light-shod, carrying his spade, heroic through the sunshine, he swings along our open street indifferent to the jeering lads.

When Robin loves, open and downrightly he proffers all his manhood and proclaims it : with divine gesture, he defies the lords and commonalty : " Faith," says he, " is bond for honest comrades ; other, means treachery and misdoubting : what for is Liberty if not for Love ? "

### *A Woman.*

**G**ENEROUS is she and wise : unmarried she has made her home in life with the well-married women, mothers of many children.

Out of her broad, deep breast comes the sea-wind of great laughter : her eyes look keenly, kindly, they search and turn not aside.

Women and men are equally her comrades, the younger call her Mother, for she loves all that lives.

Music she makes, she writes, of every art she is a craftsman, but chiefly of the highest that rounds all, fellowship ; which, as the sun when he is risen does outshine the moon his fair vice-regent, so outshines pale white religion.

### *A Preacher.*

**A**FTER the singing was done, he stood up silent, looking upon the people. Rank upon rank, as type upon a page he conned them. All the faces



were as words, but as he ran his eyes over the page, it was not them he heeded, but again, again as so often before, a single mystic question that leapt to greet him from among them all.

Then to his lips, that let them pass as though with careful choice, the words responding came ; strange simple words, gathered in many fields, following one another in a solemn dance, sure-footed rhythmical and sacred all ; yet all, as it were unheeded of his brain, from his lips issuing to their purpose, obedient to their choice.

Under his deep-enkindled eyes the people sat ; they heard but did not understand him, and he, he heeded not whether they understood or heard his voice.

Intent upon his answer, straight he stood, slender in his black coat buttoned across his breast, stretching his long arms out as if to them, yet as if not to them, but to some One among their many that he knew, with Whom alone he spoke.

He spoke as to a friend who understands, but simply ; he spoke as looking into his child-friend's face sure of response there ; he stretched his arms to meet the child's embrace.

The people made no answer ; they shuffled in their chairs ; they smiled at his tight-buttoned coat, at the freckles upon his nose, at his stiffly stretched out arms, and his quaint careful words that sang as they came slowly from his lips ; the people smiled, they did not understand, not one of them stretched out his arms in answer.

Looking upon them all what did he see ?

From behind their faces looking out, from behind

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those quizzically smiling lips and eyes, the divine dear infant face, the still-unconscious Soul watching him with its truth-compelling gaze.

So, as a mother to her little babe, yea, as Madonna to the Blessed One, he spoke his sweet strange crooning mystic words.

### *The Waif.*

THOUGH I be but a helpless little soul on whom the world frowns, pursing up its lips and whispering serpent words, yet hath God given me joy, even with this my body.

And he hath given me childish words of praise to Him, because He filled you so with love you opened wide your hearts to me, fatherless, motherless, bodiless waif of the night, and made me sharer in His joy and yours.

### *A Child.*

HE is not four years old, but out of his clear eyes—as from far sunset heights where the blue rises to meet the stars—out of his clear child's eyes the Timeless One looks love upon his world.

Very wise are his eyes, candid and pure, because for his begetting Love took up in His creative hands two living souls, tearing them from the places where they stood, and in the world's sight wedding them together.

Him, august, the world saw not, but the woman and the man it saw.

It saw their empty places, their broken pledges, the

marred forsaken hearths that they had left : it saw and cursed them.

But Love amid their wonder said, " World, you shall misunderstand no longer ! Behold, I wrought this handiwork for you."

Then from the bodies of those two came forth a Child that seemed none other now than Love Himself ; to whom the old world—ashamed of its poor cursing—holds longingly out its foolish eager hands.

And the child smiling comes.

*The Alchemist.*

BEHOLD this man ; beset in boyhood by ineffectual passions, rathe, unripe and bitter-sweet, loves whose appeal was only to be met by mocking laughter, rude rebuffs : haunted in manhood by a dull red heat that gave no light but instead the smoking darkness of a passionate uncertainty : a stirring of dread loves, wild hopes too near to madness, too hardly captured from the impossible regions of sin or death or dream, wantonly to be pursued any more, waywardly now to be cherished, or continued as by the fond extravagance of young folly out of life's sacred store.

Now, gathering together at last all the smoking brands and blind coals of his being, and withdrawing them into the innermost chambers, covering them there close as in a furnace, containing there, within, the fierceness of their heat and quickening it with his breath ; he—the only alchemist, the creator of some final and most precious substance—out of the dross of sin and acid of pain, out of the ashes and cinders of

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dead abandoned pleasures, out of the complex conglomerate of his experience concentrated here by the fire in this closed still chamber, educes at the last enduring joy.

### *The Begetter.*

THE will and urge of Love divine enough—the passion of manhood sure and ripe enough—he knows who thrusts his prayer so deep into the secret place as there to awaken the dreaming potency, the uncreated life, and bid it forth, out of its blind recesses in the unconscious woman-womb of chaos, into the world of men.

Dark, dread that passage and adventure : he commits himself wholly to it, perishing save for its issue.

Taking the protest of institutions, breasting the laws of accomplished order, single he stands, naked, alone, unblushing, conscious that from his loins leaps the new impulse—springs the new Humanity.

The secrets of the future, that wait darkling in the abysmal treasury of the Earth until some soul dares claim them, only for him come forth.

### *To Edward Carpenter.*

TO you, comrade, my heart goes with its greeting, because while others were perplexing me, bidding me here or there with passionate importunity, you with those wise deep quiet eyes I feel upon me ever as from the eternal places watching me—say to me only “ Life, life, life, life ! ”

Running hither and thither, searching and eager, I

heard your voice and remembered : pausing and finding its place, my heart brings you its greeting.

*A Face.*

“**T**HERE is that in me I do not understand,—is there not that in you, striving to utter itself ?

It has made a perplexity of my life from its beginning ; it has taken me into dark paths, seeking now this way and now that for its expression, overburdening body and mind with its desire.

Till to-day it is a great passion, a god, that holding me like a reed between his fingers breathes into me sweet notes, that I vibrate from head to foot and feel my body changing at each breath.

For this one, now for that, stranger or comrade, present or to come, he plays, taking me up and setting me aside at his good pleasure.

But O, his breath is like a flame !

Nameless One ! this way and that from Thine inexpressible burden have I besought deliverance, but in vain.

Perhaps after all, I am destined silently to endure, till I myself, through all my flesh, through every thought and deed, through all I am, utter at last and be that measureless vast life which, like a flame, within my body at Thy presence kindles, O immortal Thou !”

## VIII. Love's Body

I SEE one in whom Love dwells.

His body is as the light that shines : his body is swift and clear.

Perfectly wrought is it of bone and ligament, of fibres subtle as silk and quintessential blood and wise firm flesh, all like a tempered bell unto his purpose sounding.

Disease, lust, tyranny, have no dwelling in him, nor discontent ; but as life bids, he acts ; and life in him is godhood, knowing its will and that its fruit is good, and well content awaiting it.

And I saw the Great Fellowship—the fellowship of the Divine People—how it impassions those strong shining ones, coals of pure fierceness burning together, one white undying flame.

Then I remembered how Walt Whitman, when his people was responding to war's wild challenge, his soul responding also, made oath and answer for himself in solemn words, to build his body up into an altar that should sustain that changeless fire.

And now—his outer body broken, shattered, dead,—the inner, one and constant—I see him stand, holding his beacon high above the clouds of Time, not for America alone, but as a sign to every nation :—a man responsive to Love's lightest breath, a man for Love's most fierce demand, patient, enduring.

**H**E heralds the new days when comradeship shall be established among men, and Man the Divine Being, shall awake in them and rule.

When, beholding Love no longer as though bound and blinded amid the jealousies and lusts of lovers, but as He truly is, we shall misunderstand our passion no more, but to us it will be sacred, reverent, immortal, not to be refused.

Nor shall we miss any longer the wondrous uses of the bodies of His dwelling, the symbols of His mystery, but enter through them into His delight.

**A**ND even now that day begins to break : wherefore, do you, dear body, my companion, remain no more without the Fellowship, keeping my soul divided ; but when my heart runs forward, praising and acclaiming as its own that free life of Love, do you consent thereto making one voice with mine.

Hold me not back any more out of that life which I would share : retain me no more within the clinging web of your sensations.

For you yourself declare it is not your own pleasure that will satisfy you, nor even your renewal again and yet again : but that in the mystery of our companionship, and its obscure necessities, Humanity should find an answer to the ancient riddle of the Earth, and therewith our enfranchisement.

**O**N my side also, I will be faithful, for wherever I have arrived it is in you, my body ; it is you that have brought me hither to all I know, and I have hardly yet begun to understand your worth.

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You, body, were from the beginning, and are until the end, responsive to every need :—religion, politics and whatever men discuss, arose in you to be settled there : the more profound and sacred, the more deeply involved.

The realities of God and Man and the fragrant passion of Love, are flowers that could not bloom for us unless they were securely rooted in your flesh : art, worship and philanthropy are vain notions, mere pastimes for the polite, unless they arise out of the impulse of that passion which you alone can harbour and communicate.

You are the vehicle of the soul, and not until the body of a man is become as sacred and as beautiful to us as the body of a woman, his loins as significant of religion as her womb and breasts, and the junction of their bodies the very sacrament of the mysteries, not until then can life become again for us potent and clean and sweet.

For passion is the gift of God, and the seed of the divine life is sown by it in you : you are the place of Love's indwelling, the vessel of Love's communion, the meeting-house for worshippers, the soul's companion from whom she must not part until you have unlocked the gates of liberty, and breathed the spirit of aeonian life.

WHEREFORE I made this song for my body :  
    *" Body, I cannot think that you were born  
Merely to be my raiment, till, outworn,  
I fling you down to perish in the mire ;  
Rather you seem the flesh of some desire  
Elder than I, and mystical to me :  
You were not wrought so wondrous well to be  
The creature of my fancy ; you are part  
Of that Eternal Being at whose heart*



*The infinite pure purpose of the Earth  
Waits, until Man himself shall come to birth."*

THEN answering me, my body said : " Brother, I am not separate, as may appear, a being complete in myself, but one of many and a member of all.

" Wherefore, cause me not to live apart and solitary, but give me to the dear contact of Earth and of my fellows, and to the living air and sun, that so I may come to utter all I know.

" Apart I cannot tell it, but I am capable of things you do not dream of.

" When you shall give me to my proper task and labour, toiling, rejoicing, suffering in the life of all my kind, I will communicate my secret to you.

" For then I shall be as a leaf of the Great Tree to whom the blowing winds give speech, and in my words the wisdom of the commerce between earth and sky.

" As yet I am but dumb : for you are still withholding me, for purposes that are but as ignorance and folly, from the labours that endure."

IN no book is it written, but deep within the body if one might read, in each heart's longing of unuttered prayer is hid life's secret.

Creator, Who, in the purpose of my life dwellest as in a temple—Almighty God, Who holdest each life's destiny hidden and safe from it, safe, safe within it—very self of itself, spiritual core of flesh—O, sacred, universal and ineffable Me, source of each life and most for me of

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mine, purpose and guide of all—here, now, seeking my self, my work, my destiny, hungering for the soul's bread of fellowship, O God, I come to Thee!

Within, I feel Thy purpose moulding me still, as in all the immeasurable past, patiently, sternly, surely, to mine unconscious thought. Fearless, I yield my body and mind to Thee for Thy creating : I take Thy will : I have no other being.

**I** AM grateful, O wise Love, for my path before me, for the task that opens ever to my hand, for the kindling of the eternal flame : but I pray Thee give me yet another gift : that I go not solitary on my way, labouring alone !

Give me, O my God, my share in Thee !

Let me sometimes feel about me the enkindling power of Thy creating ! Let me sometimes lose my self and my task in Thine : let me find my home in all that is not me !

**A** GAIN, these are the words of a mortal, longing for the immortal Lover :

“Behold now, and look upon me, Thou that lovest me : for O I am weary of my virginity : what is this my maidenhood but a barren field.

“It bringeth forth, it bringeth forth, but it is not fruit : O I am weary of my virginity.

“I have no beauty that Thou shouldst desire me, O

Lord of Life, but I long after Thee : surely when I was being conceived I beheld Thy face, wherefore I am unsatisfied because of Thee : O whither have I strayed that I behold thee now no more ?

"I am lost : I walk among dreams : my soul sleepeth till thou awake her :—Lord, O my Lord, how long ?"

"**B**ELOVED, I praise Thee for the love with which Thou dost encompass me ! O wise lover, thou art very patient with the slow maturing of my love.

"Thou knowest the ways of life and why I am not ready yet for Thy avowal : I know not, only I know I am not ready—eager to-day for Thee, to-morrow barren of desire, indifferent to Thee—again utterly perplexed by mine inconstant girlish heart !

"Thou knowest, O patient and wise Lover, thou knowest, and my poor heart blesses thee.

"I too, impatient though I be, am I not patient ?"

"**O** LOVE, my God, that I might give body to Thee, substance tangible to the hearts of men !

"Long enough have I played at personation, now that I might be He whom I worship, yea for I shall be He !

"Not merely to some belov'd one offering, but entertaining the Divine Life within, that burns and blazes forth on all, a lover in whom Love abides.

"Come Love ! Thou art not my God, abiding not in me !

"This conscious being of mine is all too good for him that dwells therein, is capable and worthy even of Thee.

"Abandoning my claim on it and all, I am come at last to Thee,

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"I am come at last to the door I cannot pass, so narrow it is and low ; I behold, on the farther side, my proper life, and pass I will.

"If I am very patient, humble and eager, then shall I pass through, even as a child that passes the door of birth, even as one that passes through death's door."

"**B**ELOVED, who art nearer me than aught, mysterious invisible Being, whom with deep breaths and worship I perceive, as an infant feels the mother-presence near,—Beloved, do I wrong Thee saying 'God' ?

"Behold, I long, ah foolishly I long, to know thy name, to see thy face, to hear thy voice ; yet when I know Thee near, I have no care even for these, only my thought, my brain, cries out if it might serve Thee.

"See, yonder is a man whose words are all afire with love ; like burning coals out of the engine-draught they fall, enkindling the dry ground, blown recklessly up aloft, outbreathed from a fierce furnace of inspired delight that heeds them not, fierily whirling on its way.

"Yea, and such urging fire even in me, Thou art, that with deep breaths and wondering gusts of prayer I feed and fan.

"And these poor words I scatter are the rattling hail thou sowest as I go, urged ever on by Thee.

"O Love, I call Thee by this name or that, and it grows false to Thee, but Thou remainest.

"By human or celestial names I call Thee—they cannot hold Thee always—but always Thou, in my heart and the great heart of the world, kindest and burnest."

**I**T is easy to undress the body, and good to stand out naked in the immortal freshness of the wind ; but to undress the soul, to put off bodily consciousness, cares and the raiments of thought, to stand out naked in the winds of the Spirit,—though it is better, it is not easy.

To know the beloved is sweet, and to become one together in the body is a mystery : so also is it mystically sweeter to know the invading presence of the soul's Lover, and to become one body in Him.

It is not easy to unwrap the soul, embuttomed and enwrapped in things and thought, but it is sweet to lie down and rest in the Beloved's arms.

**H**E came to me in the fields, the Divine Lover. I had no name upon my lips to greet Him when He came, but all my being welcomed Him with lover's joy.

And now I had rather He came to them I love as unto me He came—yea, I had rather that than I should come to them.

I had rather he should satisfy their longing for a lover : nay, unless it were He, not I, that came in me, how could I ever satisfy their longing ?

**I** SEE the wanderer, Love, showing himself to them that believe on him, abiding with them, though he passes, to gather together by twos and by threes and by handfuls the myriad folk, out of their human passion to shape him a body for fulfilling the heavens and earth.

Who is faithful to Him and fears nothing, but gives up himself full of failings, weak, foolish, treacherous, cun-

## 66      The Great Companions

ning, into the hands creative, of him in His unrelenting patience, Love fashions a part of that Body Immortal, that Beauty Eternal, that Changeless Glory.

ONCE, before Love transformed them, these sought only wealth and power, that men might applaud and that women might give them their love ; but now they are content, having become a part of His body.

For Deity became the word of their longing : to know themselves in the Absolute, that alone was to find their place : it was to have no longer any need for praise or for success, it was to forget anxiety and fierce desire.

Weak they might be, foolish they might be, they might fail to effect their purposes, but behold they loved ! therefore they were in the fellowship wherein is God : their life is not weak, nor foolish, nor vain in That : in That it is immortal, the Principle of the Ages.

FOR ever, through all the years, Love the transcendent is finding a Body for himself in the passionate desire of the creatures : his life, hidden within their flesh, awakes at some magical glance or touch or breath.

Flower-like becomes the body that understands, the flesh wherein He awakens.

It shines within : its dulness dies away.

The heavy fragrance passes from desire : it opens and emits a mystic virtue.

OUT of this human flesh, so subtly wrought and curiously fashioned with all the wisdom of the ages, pure white and wonderful I see thy blossom break, Lily of World's Desire.

Mystic the soil thou hast chosen, precious and fit for thee : and though the body I love should crumble for thy sake into its clayey stuff, yet was it for thy flame, O Lily, that it was filled so full of wonder and made so intricately rich with exquisite thought.

O passionate Lily ! I know thou art not Love's sole blossoming, but in these meadows of Life's grass, its unintelligible multitude, thou standest up and takest mine ignorant heart with joy.

For thee, not for thy fruit, I offer praise, divine white fragrant flower !—yet thou too bearest wholesome rounded fruit.

Thy fruit is a new world, a world all-conscious of itself as a man, a woman, is self-conscious : a radiant singing world that is a God.

Ah, passionate Love, without the men and women fit for thy fierce patient ultimate comradeship, and for its sake indifferent to the old-world standards of stationary and restricted love, that new world is not—nay, the unfolding of thy fiery flower delays !

## IX. For Comrades and Lovers

*AS I go adown the lane that glimmers through the copse  
With the high elms reaching to the sky,  
As I go adown the lane in the November dusk,  
Trudging through the mire, under the first pale stars,  
Heavy-footed, stupid-hearted as I go  
Clothed in cares, a prey to pain—  
I am thinking of a letter from my friend across the sea,  
A word or two of love I had not hoped for—  
When out above me looking, out towards me reaching,  
With wonderful immortal gaze and strong uplifting arms,  
I see One stand before me, nameless, near.  
Mayhap it is my friend, mayhap it is Another ;  
But my heart leaps quick with singing now,  
Now with open lips I cry, " Brother ! Brother ! Brother ! "  
Across the sea and round the whole great Earth  
Into his arms I run.*

**B**Y what name can I call you ? what word that will be faithful to us who are together spite of partings, to us who dare accept what Love shall bring—for He is greater than it all, and wise to choose and He hath made us fearless of its fear. Ah, He embraces all things, and the All speaks to my heart of you !—by what name can I call you ?

*Comrade ! 'Tis the word of the wind that carries the*



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awakening rain, and of the thrushes answering : the word that is the grip of a man's hand, the secret of a woman's face, heart-worship pouring its treasure out : the word of Love creative, whose very saying lifts the lowest : the word your self has taught and teaches me, Comrade.

COMRADE, we are but one another's for Love's high uses.

Do we not stand at the beginning of one of God's adventures, and He eager to commence in us the creation of some new thing ?

Alone I can do nothing, and without you, I am, as to this wonder, but alone—what do I say ? it is not I but He that stands delaying.

WHEN I begin to guess at the issue of our Fellowship, saying, "Do you not see ? It leads to this and this good thing, to this splendid achievement for us all ?" when I begin to find justifications and results, then I lose hold ; our Fellowship supports me then no longer with everlasting arms and perfect counsel.

But when once more I hear Its pure voice calling, when on mine eyes again I feel the light that frees their gaze from lingering on results ; I know it is not to accomplish this or that that we are come together, but to abide in the Fellowship as members of Its body, letting Its joy course through our passion to accomplish Its high will.

I know that to the soul, among all justifications, the Fellowship endures and satisfies until the end.

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**I**F it were not for my comrades how should I have found my way into the Fellowship ? for it was they that took my hands and drew me on to enter.

And if I had not come into the Fellowship, never could I have won to knowledge of myself.

**N**OW why are you holding back ? ” said Love. “ Because,” said the man, “ there is no way.” “ What, little blind fool,” quoth Love, “ are you our guide.”

So they proceed a little further till now ’tis the man that cries, “ Why are you holding back, Companion ? see the way is clear ! ”

But Love rejoins again, “ You know not whither you should go, were it not better to rely on him who knows ? ”

**O** LOVE ! Thou that perplexest us with double counsels, how shall we obey thee ?

To-day, did I not hear thee saying, “ Give thyself, body and soul, to this one that thou lovest : pledge thy whole self to him, to her ! ”

To-morrow thou tearest me away, thou refuseth that I remain : thou breakest my vows, thou mockest me.

“ Come away out of thy cage,” thou criest, “ Come away ! ”

To-day, I pledge my soul because thou biddest me ; to-morrow I tear out my heart from the body where it dwells, because thou dost command,—Thou, for I am thy servant !

Haply I have misunderstood thee, didst thou, per-

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chance, say to me yesterday, "Do this and this to-day, promise not for to-morrow?"

To-day I think thou sayest, "Tease not thyself with yesterday, enough thy task!"

Ah, Love, I know thou art no wayward, no capricious wanton! keep me within the compass of thine infinite words.

**J**JOIN not yourself with those that say, "I will not begin to love, for I see what Love involves, and am not able to ensue it."

Say rather, "O Love, I only know that thou hast bidden me do this little thing, and I care not now to what greater matter it may lead me!"

Fear Love, but rather be afraid that you may of your poor prudence and blind wisdom hinder Him in his creation.

Nay, be not afraid, but behold, out of the bitter stress of your perplexity, Him Who of all the great Companions is most terrible, holy and pure, Maker and Breaker of every institution, even the institution of the mind of man.

Whose fear is as the shuddering of the firmament, the falling of the stars, the bowing of the pillars of the earth.

Who is Love, Prime-mover, Reality, Upholder unto the end, the life of your soul.

Who alone knoweth life, and can show you, for His eyes see, and all things are present before Him for ever.

Who alone can create in you that which is new, redeeming you from dismay and death-in-life unto your place among the sons of God.

## 72      The Great Companions

Be not afraid : with omnipotent will and deft wonderful fingers He controls the wild caprices of desire.

**T**HEY had come nearer and more near, till they became afraid together, lest they shut out from one another all the stars.

Her face, her hands, her presence sang to him, and he made answer like an instrument of strings, all glad, all sorrowful, passionate, unsatisfied as music, until he was afraid, afraid to feel the music of her presence.

Then Love, the merciful One, the Almighty, the Terrible, made Himself seen standing beside them.

The stars were in His windy hair that filled the Heavens and He was singing,—singing His master-song, Creation, that thrills in all things.

Then in His presence they could bear the music.

They were no more afraid, near though she stood beside him.

**P**ERPLEXED with eager hopes and wanton fancies that say they are Love's sending, but, being come, are other than of Love, the lover prays that in the place of these he may behold the sacred Thing ; behold, as in Love's mirror, his beloved.

That gazing, rapt and single, his longings may be changed to worship, all, all her spirit's food.

**I** SAT in my porchway, with the odours of the night and of the body of the earth fragrant anew from the warm rain, stealing thro' all my senses to let loose the soul within me; and all about, the windy sound of the dark trees.

And as I sat there, listening to the divine bird, the hazel-haunting nightingale, whose song bubbled up in quick jets out of the joyous earth, my soul at large, I knew it was not only to his mate upon the nest in the thick leaves and dark he sang, pouring that music forth, but yet without his mate there close beside him he would not sing at all.

O bird and brother, so possessed by song that spasm on spasm break the brave notes forth,—the untameable demonic passion of you and of the trees and of the earth's wild heart breaking up through your little pulsing throat,—again, again, until exhausted at last you are fallen silent; yet once again after a pause to sing, the passion seizing you, and at intervals through all the night—because you love your mate, the Heart of the Earth has sung again through you the birth-song of creation!

Something possesses you, brown little brother, now for a few weeks in this our English May, seizes your body and makes you warble out its life into the ear of night, wherefore you know not, you nor I, sitting here in my porchway, sharing your song with you.

But sure am I, little brother, this passion, that has turned your love to rapture and the flowers to perfume, wasting them with its ecstasy, is Life's own mystic meaning.

WHAT can I say to my beloved for my heart is full ? O give me a word for her I love !

I have no word to bring but only her name, her name that she knoweth not until I speak it.

I will carry the word that she hath not spoken, the syllables of her secret to her I love.

For Love hath shown me, yea He hath told me what she knoweth not nor might ever guess.

Because I love her He hath given me the word none knoweth but only I.

I WOULD not ask, beloved, that the darkness pass thee by, that agony may forget thee, and the grief that breaketh the heart.

I would not ask joy for thee only—joy and strength and delight—but that I too may share in the darkness, grief and pain ; may henceforward share for thy sake with all that, suffering, lives ; and that in thee our life may be fulfilled.

WITH ruthless hand my lover comes.

I have spread out before him all my gifts, I have clothed myself in graces.

He glances through them, he stretches out his hand demanding what I have not.

My clothing nor my body can hide me from my lover.

With stern demand he comes : his word cuts to my heart and numbs my brain : he asks the impossible.

I will not answer, no, I will keep silence biting my lips.

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(O treacherous heart, why will you cry so loud leaping to him ?)

With a knife my lover comes, through every barrier he cuts his way, to where within, in an enchanted slumber, I await his lips.

He comes.

All, all of mine he asks and takes and crushes under his feet, my lover.

All, all, till there is nought.

Hast thou not yet enough ? No, he has not enough, my lover !

He sees some hidden treasure that I know not, for its sake he will slay me.

Darest thou, ha ! darest thou that, my lover ?

Nay, if thou art my lover thou wilt not dare refuse it.

It is thy part, and there is none but thee to take it, not God Himself, but thee.

Ah, if thou slay me not, thou lovest not Me, the Me that can have birth only when this me dies—

Thou lovest not the unborn ineffable Thing that only thou hast seen in me, that I have caught beckoning me from thine eyes—

Thou lovest me not if thou refusest me !

THE cry of a soul unsatisfied :—

“ Was it only that near kiss thou asked of me, only that night together : only that embrace, only beloved, the begetting of our babe ?

“ Perhaps they were not a little, my love, but O they are not all !—”

## 76      The Great Companions

“NOT to this lover or to that,” I heard Love saying,  
“Not to this lover or that canst thou give all.”

But I, out of the faintness of a heart longing to spend itself, cried out, “Unless I can give all, O Love, I die!”

Love smiled and said, “Little Heart, in sooth thou shalt give all, thou shalt give all!”

“Yet to this lover or to that, nay, though they ask thy all, thou canst not give.”

LOVE, what is this sharp thing that in my hands I carry since that I was with Thee?

I am afraid because of it, for it is power.

Before, I was an impotent man needing on bonds, but now that Thou hast given me might to create and to destroy, I am afraid of liberty.

Then guide me, give me wisdom!

I am in peril of slaying them I love, since Thou, O Love, wast with me: for Thou hast set me, mere creature that I am, here at the Gates of Paradise, and put into my hands this flaming sword.

AWFUL, mysterious Love, why dost thou seal my lips against him saying “No!” so that if I should give, it would verily destroy me; but he, if I give not, may perish of embittered hope.

O, this way madness lies, madness or death, for to be near together, he demanding, I refusing, is too fierce for me to bear.

Surely of such conjunction are phantom births, hatreds, horrors and unspeakable things, knots in the brain that life tugs ever tighter until the frayed thread breaks.



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Love, only thy fingers can untie the threads thy fingers tangled !

But if thou wilt not ?——

O, I will endure while thou endurest, terrible one, my life.

Who knows, who guesses what he can endure in Thee, obeying Thee ?

WHEN I am sad, because there comes some heavy veil between us, because thou turn'st away from me the face I love, my words bring from thy lips no answer, my hands stretch out to thee and find thee not,—shall I reproach thee then ? Shall I rebel and beat myself against our parting ? Shall I, maddened with pain, turn on our love with bitter cursing wrath ?

Nay, for thou turnest, hidest away from me for Love's own sake, and it is Love that holds my love aside and will not let me reach thee,—Love who enkindled me and thee together, and still is all the fire that warms our shrinking hearts.

Nay, I will turn me then to Love himself, and lie down in His purpose and await His will, shutting these eyes that strain so after thee, shutting these eyes in sleep, having given to Him thy name in keeping,—having with joyful anguish given thee back to Him who gave me thee, who loves thee alway.

AND now when I am glad again, and hardly need reach out my hand to touch thee,—now when I am too near thee to need words,—fain am I to remember that high lesson learnt when thou seemed afar and I was sad.

## 78      The Great Companions

So that my hand may only touch thine for support and courage as a comrade's should ; that thou mayest never falter for my kiss, nor I for thine, upon these paths we tread ; that every word of thine may make me braver and more resolute to endure, and every thought of mine may arm thee more for battle.

For further, further yet into the strife we'll press, aye heartening one another, giving each other scope and daring, urging each other forward fearless, coveting now for one another life and death.

**I**T is the mystery of Lovers that they are to one another as the Gates of Paradise.

By her, and by her only, can he enter, by him alone can she become enfranchised and find peace.

Each to the other is the holy Gate that opens on Life's garden, yet is it not the Garden.

Resting in their delight, content in one another, they stand but at the Gate, enjoying from afar where entering, they should dwell.

**U**NLESS the body of their Love were ever changing—changing into some vaster consciousness—I think that lovers could not long sustain their joy.

Nor, if they were alone together, could the joy that pulses through them at the merest touch, be filled so rapturously full of universal meaning.

The meeting of two lovers joins again some separated strand in the world circuit of electric life.

## For Comrades and Lovers 79

I hear as it were the shout of innumerable comrades breaking across the barriers of division, to join together at the claspings of their hands.

**M**Y being rises from beneath the threshold of my consciousness, and overflows its sill, filling full body and mind of me with passionate love of you,—a love too large for you and me, vast as the space in which the stars are floating and potent as the light.

Then, comrade, what are we, that in us this godhead should thus be dwelling?

What are these bodies that, transmitting love to one another, become at last not ours, nor now for one another as before impassioned cravingly, but body of a transcending life that glows within their tissues, Ultimate Love, though as a Babe, indwelling them?

**W**HEN we are come so near that we can see into each other's eyes, that we can feel life in one thrill together, and life has become worship, being one; when out from these our selves we slip and lose them—comrade, it is not you I find, nor you do not clasp me: but you and I forgotten in that eternal moment, through one another's eyes beholding, through one another's flesh aware, and yet of one another heeding naught, being so wed together,—when we are come so near, our life is God.

## X. Liberty

OUT of the mountain-rock perdurable there springs the ever-fleeting water of the rills ; and from the abiding earth, the stable trees rooted therein, are hewn the timbers of adventure.

Even so, out of the mystical body wrought of the uttermost pledges of passion to continue undivided through eternity—out of a love perdurable as the rock, abiding as the earth, is hewn with agony, springs bursting up at last, that fleet adventurer, the sole free-footed and enfranchised one, Love's child.

THEY two, voyagers, seated to-night perhaps for the last time before the old home fire,

Change already about them—a new face—a new haunting of mysterious presences—a great uncertainty stretching before them like the sea,

Whether of life or death or separation they know not.

But here to-night, one heart together in the mystery, one true indissoluble heart,

In the old home, by the fire—whither some new stranger comes to lead them now away together or apart,

As once, a stranger, to take her hence, he came,—

Before the old home fire, they two, voyagers.

*AS* first it said, still saith the soul, "I dare;"  
Virtue and Prudence and Religion, yea  
Love, Friendship, Wisdom, all together say  
"Beware!"  
But unto all the soul replies, "I dare."

"Draw back! Repent!" they cry; "Learn to obey!  
Rebel not, venture not! Thy foolish way  
Forswear."  
Humbly answers the soul and says, "I dare."

"Yonder lies all disaster and dismay  
Dar'st thou to summon Madness and dim grey  
Despair?"  
Solemnly, proudly saith the soul, "I dare."

"A spark of God is mixed into my clay,  
Destined I know not whither nor the way;  
I dare  
Only to be mine own self everywhere."

## 82      The Great Companions

**F**EAR not, unless ye fear the inarticulate things, the love that claims no kisses, the wrath that strikes no blows ; for, since they have no body of their own, needs must they be the foes of life.

The love that claims no kisses for itself can only leer and laugh at other kisses ; the wrath that strikes no blow, takes the good zest from other deeds : so these, that should have been birth-bringers, truth-compellers, are become cheats and body-snatchers, shadows that mock at things.

They steal away love's confidence ; they hinder truth from counsel ; instead of comradeship they make a poor complacent caution, confident of success in still eluding Love's avowal.

Fear them !

They fill the night air with insistent syllables of terror ; chant of the rebel atoms, the things unborn, that yet must be begotten of men or slay them—wild, dark deliria that pursue and mad impotent solitaires, and childless women struggling to refuse them birth !—

Fear them !

Against the barriers ye set up athwart their courses, they beat and break hosts of bewildered hearts.

Fear them, or give them speech, these inarticulate things : fear them or give them being !

**T**HEY said, “ Beware lest you commit some crime or other.”

But I heard the sunshine saying : “ O ye of little faith ! Beware how you refuse the chances of life in your fond worship of the devil ye call prudence ! ”

**W**HILE you harbour any of the fears, you have not come into the faith : whether it be of Hell-fire or of the workhouse, or of the loss of your beloved, or of your mental faculties, or of your reputation for being different from the rest, of disease or doubt or failure,—whichever grips you nighest:—while you harbour any fear you have not found deliverance yet.

Faith is not sure this body of its present dwelling will escape the peril : let it perish, there are plenty more in keeping !

Faith has a welcome for all comers : it makes good use of each encounter : it knows the secret of acceptance, keeping the attitude of the Soul in the midst of life.

Faith is not anxious about rules and precedents : Give me Life, says Faith, and I will make you churches and worlds to the end of time, it was I who made all there are now !

Faith is not afraid of sins, devils and outlawed things, but walks its own way amid the wilds of temptation, untamed itself and fearless, making its own laws.

It entertains those untamed things, and enjoys their hospitality, moving in free fellowship among them, heedful of their indigenous knowledge, nourishing its soul upon their unspoiled beauty.

For Faith, revelation is for ever beginning : the air is full of divine words, of new individual meanings for men and for every creature :

It beholds the advent of the beginners, age after age, comet-like, flashing through the orderly systems, no less orderly than they, but of a vaster circle, struck through space from a more central centre,—carrying dismay as they come, unheralded, unwelcome, but with the joy of more heroic life full in their faces.

## 84      The Great Companions

**A**RE you impatient? O, I should be too.  
For I am very far from the place where I would be, the days go over and over, and I find myself again there where I was so long ago.

For weeks together I lose sight of the landmarks of my journey: I am overtaken day after day by indifference and lassitude: I wander off into indignations and side-errands: I forget.

Then presently, I remember again: the low hills break, and the peaks come into view: the fog clears away from my heart: I come into my way and confidence once again:

For a moment I am impatient with my soul for allowing all that waste and wickedness, but in the back of my heart I know it is God's way with me, it is my way, the way that is sure and for me the quickest of all.

I remember what I have seen and how Life takes its time—being born of Eternity—seeking its goal: and how when for a moment I have caught the vision of that goal, I have seen surely what a folly is impatience.

**B**EWARE of me whiles I am seeking, for I am irritable and difficult in my solitude, and woe to the intruder!

But when I have found my joy, then eagerly I greet each comer if I may but share my wonder with him:—is it not his joy I have found equally with my own?

It is a fire, my wonder, and I am but a single piece of coal: I fear it will die out quickly if I do not gather



other pieces together, communicating my delight to all—ah, then would it be royally replenished and fed!

Before I am enkindled, what can I have for fellowship? it is better that I sit alone: but joy runs abroad with greetings till it has welcomed all.

ONCE I was a man, and as a man I strove and doubted and boasted me; but now I am become of God, I have put away my cares, and merrily I live as a particle of Deity.

What He singeth I know not, but I feel in my pulses that He singeth: what He createth I know not, but in my flesh is the joy of His Creating: what He awaiteth I do not know, but in Him I endure.

How should I tell His purpose? Only in my body I know that His will, flowing through me for ever, is the tide and passion of Eternal Love.

I WAS seeking a rare flower, and ever dissatisfied; but now the mere grass itself—the mere wonderful innumerable living blades, the tall jointed stems and flowery spears, the grass of the field—is my joy all the day long.

I was dazzled by some one divine possession, some sacred hope, some memory, task, comradeship, some brilliant single lily that I saw or sought, dimming all else into a trivial unimportance.

But now my joy is in the myriad circumstances, the infinite commonplaces, the plentiful illimitable grass that is always full of flowers.

It seemed then so very urgent that I should realize this or that, that I acknowledge the first value of some

## 86      The Great Companions

special thing, or man, or act, that I should be sure of some central point and pivoted on that : but to-day I move and live in worship : every atom of me is become articulate, and everywhere God is.

I have awaked to find the meadows full of grass, the air of spirit, the hours of immortality.

I perceive that to live is to be continually uttered of Love to all or any, to become all life, all joy !

## XI. Vista

**A** LOW, bleak sky—no cloud, no sun—and drawing down to night: a grey stubble-field that offers nothing but the blossoms of stunted ineffective feverfew: one idly watching the smoke of field-trash, piled together, burning: no light of sunset in the dull west, only out of the heavier east a damp uncertain wind.

Whence art thou, blessed laughter, like a fire of bright flames consuming the cumbering grey stubble?

O blessed laughter, out of cares and questionings, and the miserable lifeless husks of us, what glee, what glee thou makest!

Some wind gathers our weary trash, our precious useless nothings, tossing them together: the spark breaks, and in the heap those separate nothings melt into white smoke and crackle together in flames, and give themselves to laughter!

Surely thou dwellest in God's breast, as fire in the heart of the Earth.

Come then, divine destroyer of care, brother of tears and song!

Come shake our hearts together in thine irresistible chorus!

Come Holy Laughter!

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**O**UR road, straight and plain enough while it lasted, comes out presently upon the mountain-side, and of a sudden is at its end.

Whither were we going so confidently that now we should be so much dismayed ?

Here there is no one to advise with : we must make our own track across the heather : maybe, later on we shall take up again with the road, maybe never again.

(Or you sit by the fire and the year dies out : you discard your former motives, you see they will not carry you into the new.

You see that henceforward you can do nothing for the sake of money—that road ends here—neither can you do anything whose end is other men's approval, nor seek any justification whatsoever of those that you have heeded in the year gone by.)

We have come out onto the mountain-side, we are loosened from motives and from tasks : for an hour—or for ever—the road has disappeared and the old claims have suddenly let us go : whither then shall we journey ?

Do you not know, in your heart and across the heather, the beckoning of the fellowship, the bidding of your Soul ?

**U**P from the road sweeps a wide field to the wood : through its stubble and over its rich soil a great wind blows into the night, a great wind shouting in the wood and hastening the low-hung tawny clouds.

Great words it shouts unto the fields, the woods and the tempestuous sky, and to me taking the cart-track up the hill : I hear not only the clamour of dusky woods, but mingled with their rooky call, great words.

Brother blowing towards the night, what are the words of your challenge ?

'Tis "Death !" you shout and sing unto the woods and me : out of the unfathomed spaces the unknowable impulsion of your birth, "Death ! death !" exulting, warning, to me, flying into the night you cry this word.

Green among the dead stubble springs the three-foiled clover, already in the harrowed ground sleeps the new seed ; and in the tossing wood, darkening to the night, blithe answer make the birds among the branches : "Welcome to Death !" they chirp and sing and quail not.

Sometimes to us out of the untold deeps and spaces of our being, across our life, on toward these flying skies that are the skirts of dark mysterious night,—towards the unknown out of the deep unknown, the great wind shouts its message, fierce, exultant, strong, "Death ! Death !" it cries.

Like branches in the gale, like branches heavy with frail and fluttering leaves, bow all our thoughts before it.

But even then, to that exultant storm, to that dark tyrannous, overwhelming storm, something in us—(some bird in the tossed branches, some three-foiled clover in the stubble-rows, some sleeping, waiting seed beneath the soil)—hearing the shout of Death awakes rejoicing and answers song with song.

THAT pain should be, catching and closing fast the soul within its net ; that pain should be, instead of life with its great outlook, its windy heights and vast

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horizons : that these black hours should be, sin, madness and decay, this irremediable twist of body and mind : this separateness, this injustice, this isolated satisfaction and contentment :—is there not here a menace ?

Does this not shake our happiness, pointing at it as with ironic finger ?

Can honest joy endure in a world where evil dwells ?  
Ay, can It !

Joy looks this dark thing in the eyes, this untamed thing it faces, and gazing in those wild dark eyes, joy sings !

Joy sings, and from Death's clutch leaps life at liberty : out to meet pain goes Love with life's enlargement : and over all disaster and injustice, sin, madness, separation and complacency, joy ascends :—joy of some Life in whom all beings are, in whom all beings do themselves discover,—joy of some life in whom all life is joy.

PETER, that wert the same age as my sorrow that is for ever young, twin playful brother of my bitter pain, would they had taken her and left thee, my comfort, my joy !

Kitten that thou wert, thou wast small enough for grief to let thee lie in my poor heart, and, since thy grey eyes saw not there its sickness, but saw there only love, thou wast its medicine.

But thou art gone : only thy sad too conscious sister Sorrow remains to me, unfortunate.

Nay then, I will not rebel : I will not unworthily bemoan me !

Hadst thou stayed, thou hadst outgrown Her, and been playmate of Hers no longer, Puss Peter !

Ah now, if it were She indeed was gone from me, stolen away, and thou left in Her stead, then were I impoverished ! then were I bereft !

For She is mine inalienable possession that Love has given me : I had rather lose thee, little playful joy, than my most sacred Sorrow.

**I**F you say I must live for ever, show me then the immortal being that I am : for I am sure this dim body, these weary thoughts and tasks, this flickering self that is now one thing now another, cannot endure, savouring too much of mere mortality.

I would not go following on with these for ever, but if I might haply ascend into the great spaces of being, then would I live.

When I remember some immortal fancy, beholding its divine abiding face, I would be such as it in beauty and in joy, for I can see that these must be immortal.

**T**HE barriers break, life opens all about us ; the faces grown so long familiar are become as words, each one with infinite meaning.

The barriers break : respectability and the dull order of life grows suddenly thin, as a veil through which the eyes of Love are looking upon us ; intense as a wild

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dream they shine, but they are Love's eyes, not the eyes of Fear.

The barriers break : the round of work and of doing important things gives way before me ; I see it is only a line attempting to enclose in its mere circle some stupendous thing, and now it is the Thing I see, no more the circle which has given way.

Death intervenes : into the midst of our talking and our argument comes Death : the barriers break and let him in.

He has been looking on us from among the stars and from between the leaves : he has been watching with eternal eyes amid the moments of our waking and our dreams.

Now at last we behold him, and stars and leaves and ticking moments are as though they were not, for he is here, Death, who was always here.

The barriers break, barriers that we clung to as ourselves : they break, the forms of thought, the bodies of our beloved break, break : like dust in the rain they are dissolved and broken and lost.

The barriers break to let loose that which they withheld ; break to let loose what they have kept so faithfully.

The box is broken, and the fragrance of the nard spreads through the house like worship.

The bond is broken : in his agony Love slowly rises up, a man bewildered.

The body is broken—O body belov'd you are broken ! the beautiful life I know perishes and is done.

But behold, as out of a seed that dies and breaks asunder, under the eyes of Love comes forth the new life we call death, more beautiful and winged and free.



AH, what was that upon my face ?  
It was the wind blowing—the wind blowing !—  
but the wind, the wind is on the other side of the house.

I do not think it was the wind.

O foolish me ! it was so like *his* breath here on my  
aching empty brow—his breath, half kiss, half laughter !

It must have been the wind, for he is dead—oh, oh,  
he could not come !

Bleak, horrible, mocking Life ! and you, lying wind  
with your caresses, I do not want you, you !

But him—how I want him !

He looks so little there, I could up-gather him into my  
arms and away, away !

Fire and earth shall not have thee, little one—away,  
away !

But whither ? whither ?

No, he is gone already, he might not wait me, he left  
me only this. . . .

Gone—is he gone ?

It does not seem to me that he is gone.

Was he not here but now ? Did he not touch my  
hair, my cheek, my brow ?

Who says it was the wind ? the wind is on the other  
side of the house ! . . .

He loved the wind : perhaps it was the wind.

Yes, yes ! the trees are moving there against the sky,  
and I am sure he moves them.

I know the sign, know what it is they mean, as though  
he speaks, as though he beckons with his hand to me.

What do I care on which side of the house the wind  
blows ? for he loved the blowing wind—Brother Wind,  
messenger ! . . .

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Dear, forgive me my denying !

At the first I knew it was you : but I was very tired and almost blind with unwept pain and I could not dare believe, for fear, for fear !

But now that you have kissed me in the wind, and made me your own sign against the edge of the sky, there where I could see it from my window, now they shall take away that Little Thing (Brother Wind says it to me) ; I will give my treasure up to pure fire and the enduring Earth, loving for ever Earth and Fire in you. . . .

Oh, you are in the grass, a little yellow flower ; and you are in the sky where the winds blow ; and you are in the earth my feet kiss and the trees abide in ; in everything that comes and looks, in each I can see you.

O my love, do not let me doubt !

Do not leave me to forget anything of this, forgetting all things else,—save only your breathing in the wind, your love, your look in all the welcome creatures !

Yes, and in the great vast lonely Night that broods over the trees, your presence, leaving no loneliness in the night for me, because your soul, that now goes free, is vaster, vaster, vaster !

**N**OW Time returns upon itself.

I am grown small, smaller almost than when in embryo hidden I dwelled.

I that had care of babes, myself now but a dim unconscious babe, into the womb-life of unconsciousness return, my Mother I return to Thee !

No fear comes nigh me ; for about me close, Thy warm life presses, and it cherishes something that seems Thy very life in me.

I am so little now, I am all Thee.

Thy life is all about me, Thine immortal life : it is the love of these that cherish me, children of mine, helpers and presences, the dear sun at the window and the breeze : I love them all : I know them all as Thine : now all my life reveals they all are Thee.

I am so small, I pass quite into dim forgetfulness, into Thy love, my Mother, into Thee.

THEY fade before me, faces and things and thoughts, blown and scattered along the morning gale of Death, dissipated and absorbed by the rising sun of Life : I see them flying and returning whence they came.

With them goes all my world of thought, my body, whither I know not, save that it goes to Thee, Reality, immortal changeless, vital, the real Earth, whose thought am I, whose changeless thought am I.

O to Thee, gale of the morning I give myself joyfully to be scattered : I die into thy beams, O rising Sun : O Earth I was born of Thee to return bearing messages to Thee !

Forth didst thou send me to return.

Deep under all my volatile changing thoughts I have known Thee solid serene, O Earth, O ultimate, abiding Me.

Into Thee I return, I am !

Envoi.

*WORDS were worth nothing if words could say all :  
ever behind our singing is the silence out of which  
it broke.*

*So too, behind this little book with its words of franchise,  
my enfranchisement remains untold.*

*The trees swing in the gale and make music in it ; but  
in the Earth abiding they keep silence.*

*So for you, beloved, abiding in your love, my heart  
keeps silence while I sing.*





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